1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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Chapter 5 The Extent of Hindu Absorption

The effects of migration to industrial employment thus far analyzed have been to accelerate the decline of Santal solidarity among the Santal generally and especially among Santal industrial workers. It has thus furthered the same tendency which the closure of the political rank path and the spread of the market and of increased wealth differences accelerated. Before moving on, it is useful to consider how much Hindu social absorption has accompanied this decline in solidarity.

Indian census material on religious identification is often cited as evidence of Hindu social absorption. Converting such figures on the southern Santal to percentages, the following table can be constructed. Conclusions from these figures, which indicate very little in the way of a trend, must be drawn with extreme caution.

My own field observations suggest that these figures do not reflect major changes in religious belief and practice. There are virtually no villages where half or even one-tenth of the Santal practice Hindu rituals distinct from the ritual practices of the other Santal residents, nor is there some sizable propor-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF SANTAL RETURNED AS HINDU
(Census of India 1931)*

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Orissa	44	46	43	48
Chota Nagpur Feudatory States (Seraikela, Kharswan)		0	18	48
Singhbhum	16	3	56	23

tion of villages which follow distinctively Hindu religious practices. I have heard of only one Santal village within the territory occupied by the southern Santal which has abandoned traditional forms of worship and become thoroughly Hinduized. In 1916 Roy reported the conversion to Hinduism of a number of Santal in a Hindu village in Orissa; they were served by an outcast Brahman priest.[1] I met only one Santal who had taken up Hindu religious practices, and he lived in the city of Jamshedpur. Nowhere that I went were Santal served by Brahmans, though in some areas Santal families are occasionally visited by members of the Potkar caste, who bring messages from the dead for a fee. The Santal also employ females of various low Hindu castes to deliver their children and sometimes patronize Hindu practitioners of traditional medicine (*Kubraj*; Hindi).

It is true that until recently the Santal in large numbers took part, in their own way, in various Hindu festivals. At many of the major Hindu festivals the Santal would assemble for mixed dancing, and some would become possessed and speak

* More recent census figures do not contain this information because "caste has been abolished" as a legal entity.

[1] Roy, 1916.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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177 796 771 in the name of the Hindu deities invoked. Although this activity has recently been somewhat curtailed for reasons soon to be discussed, it is still possible to observe Santal worshipping Jugganath at the Cart Festival (*Rath Jatra*) in Baripoda, the capital of Mayurbhanj. Many Santal, even in villages where there are few Hindus, may also be seen immersing the Hindu [184] Tusu goddess. In spite of these activities, in which most Santal have engaged, and even though all Santal ceremonies have some Hindu elements, almost all southern Santal have remained firmly attached to their own deities, and there have been no mass conversions.

• 127 771 The Indian government's figures on Hindu religious identification are largely an artifice of census methods, and since at least the 1920's, often of coercion as well. Culshaw, for example, commments that:

> The prevailing Indian identification of race with religion has caused some confusion in their [the Santals'] minds, but the fact that about 50 per cent of Santal were returned in 1931 as Hindus and most of the remainder as followers of tribal religion indicated the heightened political consciousness of the enumerators more than any real division within the tribe.[2]

659 648 771 Many Santal reported to me that they were pressured by local Hindu authorities to register themselves as Hindus. Others claimed that ignorance played a major role in the returns; the census-takers asked, "What is your religion?" (*Dhorom*; Oriya), and most Santal, it is said, did not understand this word. When it was explained they would reply "Santal religion," and the census-taker would then say, "That is your caste (*jāti*), not

[2] Culshaw 1949:15.

Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the preparation of this monograph on the Santals, apart from my own investigations, I had to study the extant literature on the tribe. There is no gainsaying the fact they are meagre and scrappy and the very want of a comprehensive account of the tribe led me to undertake the spade work. The account that follows is rough and when I place side by side the works of Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy on the other Munda tribes, I feel the vastness of the problem before me. Should circumstances so allow, I intend to take up a comparative study of the Bengal Santals with their Bihar and Orissa brethren. This was a special desire of Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy. But the difficulties of a student of ethnology with but slender financial resources, cut off from a direct touch with the University, separated from Santal areas except during vacations, can better be imagined than described. 122 114

Moreover, the extant works are rare books. These are not lent out by the Libraries and I remember how I had to wait more than six months before I could read "The Baiga" of Father Elwin, which Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy advised me to make the basis of my enquiry on the sex-life of the Santals. 122 127

The books I used for my Santal studies, were the following :—

W. W. Hunter's Statistical Account of Santal Parganas. (Col. Dalton's account). Vol. XIV (1877).

Bengal Districts Gazetteer, Santal Parganas (Vol. XXII).

E. G. Man, Sonthalia and the Sonthals.

Introduction to the Grammar of Santali Language. Rev. L. O. Skrefsrud (Published from Benares, 1875)

Report of the condition of the Santhals in the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and North Balasore, By M. C. MacAlpin, I.C.S. (1909).

Santali-English, English-Santali Dictionary, Dr. Campbell.

Santali Dictionary, Rev. Dr. Bodding

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Risley. People of India.
Risley. Tribes and Castes of Bengal.
The Mundas and their Country. Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy.
The Kharias. Do
The Birhors. Do
The Oraons of Chotanagpur. Do
Annual Report of the Santal Mission of Northern Churches. 1934.
Hörkören Mare Hapramko Reak' Katha (Bennaguria Mission).

I used the works of Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, as the basis of my enquiry and I am indebted to a number of other books on ethnology in stimulating my endeavours. I have tried to indicate my indebtedness at the proper places, but I trust that where there has been an unintentional oversight, it will be looked upon with indulgence.

C.M.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

Conclusion

614 [27] In concluding the review of the Santal clans and sub-clans as investigated by us in Mayurbhánj, we should note that quite a number of Santal sub-clans have been unearthed by Dr. Campbell, and we have taken the liberty to incorporate his list in the Appendix along with those of Risley, as found in his *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*. An elaborate discussion of these sub-clans may form the work of a lifetime and we trust earnest students will take up this exploration.

Secondly, it may be generally observed that the sub-clans of the parent clan can marry into the other sub-clans, provided they have not the same totem. Thus a Nij-Ṭuḍu can marry a Lat' Ṭuḍu, unless of course there are other local bars, of which sometimes there is no end. It goes without saying that marriage outside the clan proper is, the most welcome, but regard must be had to some traditional enmities as between the Besras and the Ṭuḍus, Kiskus vs. Màṛṇḍis, and Santalia is replete with tales and legends of lads and lasses of such Capulets and Montagues creating a zig-saw puzzle for their parents and the clans in general.

614 688 627 Thirdly, offences against the food-taboos of the clans and sub-clans are tried by the members constituting it. Thus if a Nij-Hansdak' eats a Raj-hans, their totem, there is bound to be a gathering of all

41 Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

CHAPTER V.

Anthropometric Analysis

126 141 One hundred Santal subjects were measured in the Damin areas, of the Santal Parganas within Chota Nagpur in Bihar. All the specimens chosen were adult males, between the ages of 18 to 49 years.

[127] The technique used throughout for taking the actual measurements was that set up by R. Martin, in his "Lehrbuch der Anthropologie".

141 The data was analysed and tabulated and is given below.

Measurement or Index :	Mean ± S.E.	S.D. ± S.E.	C. of V ± S.E.
Cephalic Index	74.0 ± 0.32	3.2 ± 0.72	4.3 ± 0.96
Nasal Index	80.7 ± 0.79	7.9 ± 1.77	9.7 ± 2.17
Total Facial Index	85.4 ± 0.42	4.2 ± 0.94	4.8 ± 1.07
Upper Facial Index	53.8 ± 0.37	3.7 ± 0.83	6.8 ± 1.52
Altitudinal Index	70.0 ± 0.56	5.0 ± 1.25	8.0 ± 1.79
Orbito-nasal Index	113.6 ± 0.59	5.9 ± 1.32	5.1 ± 1.14
Rel. Hip Width	16.4 ± 0.11	1.1 ± 0.25	6.7 ± 1.49
Ponderal Index	2.8 ± 0.09	0.89 ± 0.02	3.2 ± 0.72
M. Skelic Index	166.0 ± 0.65	6.5 ± 1.45	6.0 ± 1.34
Radio-Humeral Index	72.1 ± 1.01	10.1 ± 2.25	14.0 ± 3.13
Breadth-height Index	103.4 ± 1.15	11.5 ± 2.57	11.1 ± 2.48
Stature	159.3 ± 0.54	5.4 ± 1.21	3.3 ± 0.74
Span	166.0 ± 0.60	6.0 ± 1.34	3.6 ± 0.81
Sitting height	77.1 ± 0.31	3.1 ± 0.69	4.0 ± 0.89
Head length	18.5 ± 0.06	0.6 ± 0.13	3.2 ± 0.72
Head breadth	13.7 ± 0.05	0.5 ± 0.11	3.9 ± 0.85
Head height	12.9 ± 0.10	1.0 ± 0.23	7.7 ± 1.72
Minimum frontal diameter	10.02 ± 0.12	1.2 ± 0.09	12.3 ± 0.87
Nasal height.	4.8 ± 0.04	0.4 ± 0.09	8.2 ± 1.39
Nasal breadth	3.7 ± 0.03	0.3 ± 0.07	5.4 ± 1.21
Upper facial height	7.1 ± 0.05	0.5 ± 0.11	7.0 ± 1.57
Total Facial height	11.3 ± 0.05	0.5 ± 0.10	...
External Orb. Br.	9.9 ± 0.04	0.4 ± 0.09	4.4 ± 0.98
Orbito nasal curve	11.3 ± 0.06	0.6 ± 0.14	4.0 ± 0.89
Bizygomatic breadth	13.0 ± 0.05	0.5 ± 0.10	3.0 ± 0.67
Bigonial diameter	9.2 ± 0.06	0.6 ± 0.13	5.4 ± 1.21

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forgot that he was a Santal. Another Christian who helped me was Babulal Hembrom of Barikul; a villager all his life, at my suggestion he kept a diary of life in Barikul for one year, and I have drawn freely on the material thus provided. The third name I wish to mention is that of the late Binu Hāsdāk', a *parganath* who lived in the village of Tantidanga. For some years he called to see me each week on his way to market; he used to accept a sum of two annas each time he came, not as a dole, but as the equivalent of the hospitality to which he was entitled as a visitor to my home. From him I learnt much about the ideas and customs that ruled his life, as they had done the lives of his ancestors.

A great deal has been written about the Santals, but most of the literature is difficult to find even when you know where to look for it. The bibliography contains a list of the works I have consulted, and acknowledgments have been made in footnotes. It needs to be said, however, that all subsequent workers must remain heavily indebted to that great Norwegian scholar and missionary, the late P. O. Bodding, particularly for his monumental *Santali Dictionary*, which is a veritable encyclopædia of Santal life.

I wish to thank the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal for permission to use material previously published in two papers in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, entitled "Some Notes on Bongaism" (Vol. V, 1939, No. 3) and "Some Beliefs and Customs relating to Birth among the Santals" (Vol. VII, 1941, No. 1). I owe much to the Rev. Edwin Smith, D.D., pre-eminent among missionary anthropologists, who spent Christmas at Sarenga in 1938, and has encouraged me since that time. I am deeply grateful to the Rev. Charles P. Groves, Professor of Missions at the Selly Oak Colleges, who has read the manuscript and saved me from numerous pitfalls, and to my friend the Rev. Wilfred H. Russell, who drew the map, as well as the illustrations on pages 24 and 49. I wish also to thank the Rev. Alec R. Spooner for preparing the Index. My wife has helped with many candid criticisms, constructive suggestions, and, above all, by her comradeship during the years at Sarenga.

W. J. CULSHAW.

BANKURA,
January, 1949.

5t Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

salute with the right hand; this is raised towards the face, fingers slightly bent, the fingers of the left hand lightly touching the right forearm. When a Santal is meeting his co-parents-in-law, they embrace breast to breast, exchange jokes, and make use of the inclusive form of the dual pronoun. Honoured guests as well as relations are met with dignified courtesy. Few experiences can be more refreshing than to sit in the courtyard of a Santal home after a long and dusty walk. When greetings have been exchanged, one of the girls of the house comes forward to wash the feet and massage with oil the tired calves. This done, tobacco encased in the rolled leaf of the *sal* tree is offered and gratefully accepted.

Addendum to Chapter I

The following figures for the distribution of Santals have been taken from the Statistical Tables of the *Census Report of India*, 1931. Unfortunately, the figures for 1941 do not distinguish Santals from other primitive tribes, district by district.

Bihar and Orissa		*Bengal*	
Monghyr ..	26,742	Burdwan ..	101,522
Santal Parganas	754,804	Birbhum ..	64,079
Hazaribagh ..	129,103	Bankura ..	114,577
Manbhum ..	282,315	Midnapur ..	160,750
Orissa States ..	278,284	Rajshahi ..	25,591
Bhagalpur ..	30,799	Dinajpur ..	130,328
Purnea	40,995	Jalpaiguri ..	27,859
Balasore	15,444	Rangpur ..	7,410
Singhbhum ..	108,890	Malda	72,145
		Hooghly	38,013
		Murshidabad ..	22,725

(Districts from which only a few Santals were returned have been omitted above.)

In Assam, 101,940 persons were returned as Santali speakers.

The numerical and proportionate distribution of the population in the Bankura district was given as follows:

Total primitive tribes	139,063, 12% of the total
Hindus	920,456, 83% of the total

(Of the Hindus, 102,939 were Brahmin, while 353,675 were recorded as belonging to the Depressed Classes.)

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CHAPTER 5

SOME FOLK-TALES

FOLK-TALES are meant to entertain, and only incidentally do they instruct. The stories current among the Santals do, however, reveal standards of conduct; they hold up certain types of character as admirable, others as ridiculous or contemptible, and so help to form the judgment of their hearers. Over two hundred stories told by Santals are available in English, for this is a field that early attracted the attention of Europeans living among them. The first in the field was the Rev. F. T. Cole, who in 1875 printed two stories in the *Indian Antiquary*. A further collection of tales was published in 1891, collected by the Rev. A. Campbell. The collection of C. H. Bompas, entitled *Folklore of the Santal Parganas*, was published in 1909, and this has remained a standard collection in the West. Bodding's monumental work in three volumes was not published until the years 1925–29. It contains ninety-three stories with Santali text and English translation, and the same plan was followed in his other publications, *A Chapter of Santal Folklore*, which contains ten stories, and *Witchcraft among the Santals*, which contains eight. The editor of this last work, which was published after Bodding's death, states that C. H. Bompas obtained the manuscript of many stories from Bodding.[1]

The field is far from exhausted. All collections that have been published up till now have been gathered either in the Santal Parganas or in the district of Manbhum, except for eleven stories published in a book that deals with the Santals of Mayurbhanj,[2] the extreme south of the Santal country. The tales included here are told in the Bankura district and serve to illustrate the Santal attitude towards many of the facts mentioned in other chapters.

(1) *The Grey Monkey and a Boy*

At the end of a certain bazaar there were a great many trees where lived a band of grey monkeys. Each day one of the

[1] Oslo Ethnographical Museum, *Skrifter Band* 3, Hefte 3, p. 257: "Years ago most of these tales have been retold from Mr. Bodding's manuscripts by C. H. Bompas in *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London, 1909)." For some of the facts in this paragraph I am indebted to an article entitled "The Folk-Tale in Santal Society", by Mildred Archer, *Man in India*, December 1944, Vol. XXIV.

[2] Charulal Mukherjea, *The Santals*, Indian Research Institute, Calcutta, 1943.

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tion without losing sight of their main objective, the presentation of the Christian Gospel. One of their missionaries wrote in 1865: "We have by no means lost sight of the all-important fact that secular education without heart culture is of very little consequence. Hence, we have ever made the spiritual instruction of the people as prominent as possible. . . ."[1]

The main missionary effort developed in the north after the tragic rebellion of Santals had directed public attention to their affairs. The Santal Mission of the Northern Churches published its Seventy-Fifth Annual Report in 1941 and reported a total community of over 25,000 Christians. This mission, with supporting committees in Norway, Denmark and America, grew out of the pioneer work of a remarkable Norwegian, Lars Olsen Skrefsrud, and his Danish companions, Mr. and Mrs. Boerresen. Resigning from the Gossner Lutheran Mission, they began work independently and established a mission station at Benagaria in 1867. Skrefsrud, who was in every sense a giant of a man, prepared an *Introduction to the Grammar of the Santali Language*, which was published in 1873. It is to his enthusiasm and interest [127] that we owe the account of the Santal traditions published in Santali in 1887. His linguistic work was carried forward and developed by the great scholar P. O. Bodding. To their efforts more than to any other cause the Santals owe the fact [212] that Santali has developed a literature. The first efforts of the missionaries were aimed at providing the scriptures, song books and reading primers, for which purpose the Roman script was adapted, but a great stimulus to the study by the Santals of their own institutions was provided by the publication of the [214] traditions.[2] This mission also publishes the only Santali periodical, which is now in its twenty-sixth year. Other societies that have made notable contributions to missionary work in the Santal Parganas and neighbouring areas are the Church Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland, the latter being particularly noted for the excellent service of medical missionaries at Bamdah. The Santal members of the different Church bodies are brought together in the meetings of the Santal Christian Council, a body that was established in 1934 and is the only organization of any kind that brings together Santals

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[1] Stacy, *Life of Otis Robinson Backeler*, p. 318, quoted from *Primary Education among Santals of Midnapore*, 1931, A Survey with Proposals, by Lewis Clayton Kitchen, Calcutta.

[2] *Mare Hapramko reak' Katha*, Dumka (1st ed., 1887). An English translation by P. O. Bodding was published in Oslo in 1942, entitled *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals*.

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The attitude of the community towards the family or the individual who has become Christian is a complex of tolerance and incomprehension. Becoming a Christian is not in itself an offence for which there is an established penalty in tribal custom: the village council does not act and there is no formal outcasting of the offender from the community as there is, for example, when a Santal has married outside the tribe. The denial of tobacco and drinking water, two of the common manifestations of "separateness", are rarely used in the area, though sometimes found elsewhere. Thus, in the early days of the mission at Benagaria, Skrefsrud found that Christian converts were being cut off from social intercourse; by a process that sounds very like intimidation he invited all the leading Santals of the neighbourhood to a feast with the converts and informed them that having eaten with the converts they must now receive them back into the tribe.[1] Where social ostracism does occur it does not last long. There is rarely any need for a family to change their residence on becoming Christian so far as their fellow villagers are concerned, though some Christians do so because there are occasions when an isolated Christian family is put to grave inconvenience. This is particularly the case when a death occurs, for the non-Christians will have nothing whatever to do with the disposal of a corpse after the strange manner of the Christians. Such predicaments occur only when the degree of isolation is great. With the individual convert it happens sometimes that he has to eat his meals separately from the rest of the family for a time. It is served to him out in the courtyard rather than on the verandah or in the house, but this signifies contempt rather than any other emotion and it does not last. Sometimes the members of the family show signs of genuine grief. There is no reason, from a Santal point of view, why non-Christian Santals should not marry Christians, although such marriages are not popular. The chief discouragement to them and the only discipline against them is exercised from the Christian side. And while relations between a convert and his kinsfolk and distant relatives do become strained, the old friendly relations are often resumed and it is customary for Christians to pay visits to the homes of non-Christian relations and *vice versa*. No attempt is made to dispossess or disinherit Christians who continue to enjoy the fruits of their toil in the fields.

This tolerance of Christians in the midst alongside the dis-

[1] My authority for this statement is a small life of Skrefsrud in Santali, published by the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches.

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approval of much in the Christian message is perhaps due to the fact that Santal society is not sufficiently aware of danger. In the area, very few conversions of village officials have taken place. During the first decade of the present century a *parganath* with his family became Christian, and the reports of the time speak of hoping that his example would be followed by many others. In fact the Church has made practically no progress in that *pargana* since; a brother of the convert became *parganath* in his place. In a more recent example which occured in 1940 in the Midnapore district, a baptized *parganath* retained his office, but his example in becoming Christian was not followed. The only cases of village headman and village priest accepting Baptism have occurred in one village where the mission had become landlord. The large majority of converts have come from the rank and file of Santal society.

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Individual religious experience plays a comparatively insignificant part in the first approach of the Santal to the Christian faith, though it is a strong motive in isolated cases. Dosoroth Hāsdāk', baptized in 1916 at about the age of thirty-five, was such a case. During the years when the mission was in its infancy he was growing up in a small village eighteen miles from Sarenga. He was sent to a village school by his father, and his first knowledge of Christianity was gained when he sat for the final examination, and this knowledge supplied him with a faith at a later crisis in his life to take the place of his former belief in the spirits. Here are his own words: "From that time (when he had gone to sit for an examination) I used to question in my mind the customs of the Santals. For a long time I went on drinking and dancing and I used to reverence the spirits in tree stumps, stones and trees, but all the time with growing dissatisfaction. As my sins increased, the Heavenly Father led me into more and more temptation and trouble. Two boys and two girls died at childbirth, and believing only in the spirits I ran to all the *ojhas* round about, but none could do anything. Then my wife and I talked together and decided that as the spirits had never been able to do anything we would no longer heed them but depend on God alone. So we tried to learn more about Him, and after awhile we heard of the mission at Sarenga. I went there a few times and got understanding; then I was baptized when Spencer Sahib paid his first visit to Sainadi. From that time, believing in the One God and by His mercy, all my children and all of us have remained well."[1] Dosoroth died in 1940, being

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[1] Quoted from a MS. in my possession written by Dosoroth at my request.